



Comparison of Academic Achievement in Virginia with Leading Industrialized Countries

ROUNDTABLE

Hosted by the Virginia Commission on Youth

*House Room 3, The Capitol
June 26, 2012 – 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.*

Overview

According to international assessments, students in the United States lag in academic performance when compared with students in other industrialized countries, particularly in science and mathematics. The 2009 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment indicated that, of the 34 countries evaluated, the United States ranked 14th in reading, 17th in science, and 25th in mathematics. The U.S. falls behind the highest scoring countries, including South Korea, Finland, Singapore, Shanghai in China, the Netherlands, and Canada.

Today's U.S. high school graduates compete in a global job market where highly skilled workers are in increasing demand. While other countries have made significant improvements in education, the U.S. has made only incremental improvements. The decline in the academic achievement of American students has been prominent among national and state concerns about the United States' ability to compete internationally. It is critical to evaluate academic achievement relative to Virginia's students relative to other countries in order to strengthen Virginia's schools and learning opportunities.

In 2011, the Virginia Commission on Youth adopted a two-year study plan, *Comparison of Academic Achievement in Virginia with Leading Industrialized Countries*. The two-year plan directs the Commission to:

- compare the academic achievement of Virginia's students with that of students internationally, especially in reading, mathematics, and science;
- identify features in the education systems of countries which rank higher than the United States that may contribute to academic success;
- determine whether any of these features may be adapted for use in Virginia; and
- consider other matters related to the objectives of this study and recommend feasible and appropriate options.

9:30 – 10:00

Registration and Networking

Coffee/tea service will be provided.

10:00 – 10:15

Welcome and Introductions

*Amy M. Atkinson, Executive Director
Virginia Commission on Youth*

*Javaid Siddiqi, Deputy Secretary of Education
Office of the Secretary of Education*

- 10:15 – 11:00** **Updates from the Virginia Department of Education**
Virginia Educational Initiatives
Anne Wescott, Assistant Superintendent for Policy and Communications
Preparing Virginia's Youth for the Future: College and Career Readiness
Deborah Jonas, Ph.D., Executive Director for Research and Strategic Planning
- 11:00 – Noon** **Comparison of Academic Achievement in Virginia with Leading Industrialized Countries**
James H. Stronge, Ph.D., Heritage Professor in the Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership Area, The College of William and Mary
- Noon – 12:15** **Working Lunch** (*on site*)
Attendees will take lunches to breakout sessions of their choice.
- 12:15 – 1:15** **Concurrent Subcommittee Meetings/Breakout Sessions**
Attendees will divide into four parallel sessions facilitated by members of the Commission's Study Advisory Group. The breakout sessions will focus on the assigned subcommittee topics and identify barriers, as well as solutions and actions. Each session will discuss the following for each proposed solution:
- Key elements of the solution
 - Short, medium, or long term timeframe
 - Participants in the solution – leaders, supporters
 - Immediate next steps
- Facilitators in each group help participants identify solutions, record the ideas, and identify top priorities.*

Breakout Session I – Subcommittee on the International Achievement Gap

One of the main ways to identify high-performing education systems is through international assessments, particularly the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). For this study, an analysis of high-performing international educational systems was conducted to identify best practices that may be appropriate for inclusion in Virginia's educational system.

The successes of other countries can provide potential guidance for decision-making in Virginia. This session will discuss U.S. students' performance on international assessments and why students in the U.S. are lagging behind. Findings from consistent high-performers in these assessments (South Korea, Finland, Singapore, Shanghai in China, the Netherlands, and Canada) will be highlighted and discussed.

Facilitator: Patricia Popp, Ph.D., Clinical Associate Professor/State Coordinator, Project HOPE-VA, School of Education, The College of William and Mary
Location: House Room 1

Breakout Session II – Subcommittee on Structure and Support of the Educational System

International comparisons make it possible to compare the quality of educational outcomes across educational systems. They also reveal differences in these countries' educational structures as well as the investments made in education. International comparisons provide different insights for improving educational efficiency. Certain countries have demonstrated that excellence in education can be attained consistently at reasonable cost. By examining the educational systems and structures of high performing countries, Virginia policymakers can obtain information about what works to bring about improvements in schooling and better preparation for young people during a time of deepening global interdependence. This session will discuss the system-wide reforms implemented by high-performing countries and how they may be applied in Virginia.

Facilitator: William C. Bosher, Jr., Ed.D.
Distinguished Professor of Public Policy and Education, Executive Director,
Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute
Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs,
Virginia Commonwealth University

Location: Senate Room 3

Breakout Session III – Subcommittee on Teacher Preparedness/Effectiveness

Teachers are one of the most powerful school-related factors to be considered when looking at student learning outcomes and school performance. The 2007 McKinsey Report on leading PISA countries emphasized that a key factor in school success was teacher quality. In fact, among factors, teachers offer the greatest opportunity for improving the quality of life for students.

The highest achieving countries around the world have committed significant resources to teacher training and support over the last decade. A finding across studies is that teacher quality is the most significant school factors affecting student learning. This session will focus on leading countries' efforts to promote teacher quality and effectiveness, as well as Virginia's efforts. Barriers and recommendations will also be outlined and discussed.

Facilitator: James H. Stronge, Ph.D., Heritage Professor in the Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership Area, The College of William and Mary

Location: House Room 3

Breakout Session IV – Subcommittee on Educational Innovations

This subcommittee encompasses educational initiatives that complement high-performing educational systems that enable Virginia's school divisions to broaden the array of courses they offer, reach out to more non-traditional students and provide more educational options for families. The issues covered by this subcommittee include Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math – Health (STEM-H) academies, programs that address students at risk of not graduating, high ability students, and virtual learning.

Facilitator: Meredith Strohm Gunter, Ph.D., Outreach Director, Demographics & Workforce
Weldon Cooper Center, University of Virginia

Location: Senate Room 2 (TBD)

1:15 – 1:50

Presentation of Subcommittee Discussion and Planning Session

Roundtable participants will reconvene and the Subcommittees will present the barriers and recommendations developed during the breakout sessions. Roundtable participants will also provide final thoughts, and develop next steps based upon the strategies and recommendations discussed.

Facilitator: Amy Atkinson

Location: House Room 3

1:50 – 2:00

Closing Remarks

The Honorable Laura Fornash, Secretary of Education

VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH
General Assembly Building, Suite 269 • Richmond, Virginia 23219 • 804-371-2481
<http://vcoy.virginia.gov>